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EUR/PGI FOR JIM KUYKENDALL

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TAGS: [KWMN](#) [KISL](#) [KTIP](#) [SW](#)  
SUBJECT: SWEDEN: EUR ENGAGEMENT ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

REF: A. 09 STATE 124579  
[B.](#) 09 BRUSSELS 1567  
[C.](#) 09 STOCKHOLM 784  
[D.](#) 09 STOCKHOLM 633  
[E.](#) 09 STOCKHOLM 624

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[1.](#) Summary: Embassy Stockholm integrates women's issues in our International Visitor Leadership Programs in support of women's health, career advancement and leadership opportunities. Post also engages the Swedes on global women's issues such as gender-based violence and women's empowerment in Africa and the Middle East. Trafficking features into our work, both in consular interviews with Swedish au pairs who will work in the United States and in consultations with law enforcement officials who monitor sex trafficking patterns. We assess new opportunities for engagement with women in the areas of green entrepreneurship, trafficking in persons, and in our ongoing engagement with women from minority communities. End Summary.

[2.](#) The following is Embassy Stockholm's response to ref A request for information on engagement on women's issues.

[3.](#) Women in Sweden enjoy a high standard of living. Sweden ranks fourth in the 2009 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index, receiving high marks along with its Nordic neighbors for women's economic participation, educational attainment, health and political empowerment. While post had no FY09 grants specifically for women's issues or organizations, 15 of 22 nominees for FY09 IVLP programs were female and were made in support of critical women's issues including Breast Cancer Awareness and Women in Law Enforcement. For FY10, 6 of 21 nominees are women, of which one woman will participate in a program for Young Muslim Leaders.

[4.](#) Sweden has one of the largest assistance programs in the world and allocated approximately \$4.3 billion for international development cooperation in 2009. There are notable areas for bilateral engagement on development assistance that target women's issues in Africa and the Middle East. In September 2009, Special Envoy Howard Wolpe's visit to Stockholm highlighted the common goal of combating gender-based violence in the African Great Lakes region (ref E). Empowering women and girls is also a key part of Sweden's development efforts in Afghanistan and is often cited by the GOS as one of the reasons Sweden is involved in the international efforts there. A visit by USAID Acting Administrator Alonzo Fulham to Stockholm in November 2009 for the European Development Days conference further underscored the Swedes' commitment to development cooperation in Afghanistan (ref B).

[5.](#) Sweden is one of the world's leading per capita providers of au pairs to the United States. Approximately 98% of au pairs are women between the ages of 18 and 24. Pursuant to

consular regulations following the implementation of the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (WWTVPRA) of 2008, the consular section provides all au pairs and domestic servants with information related to U.S. labor trafficking rules and regulations as well as emergency contact information. In the last fiscal quarter (October to December 2009), Stockholm processed approximately 250 female au pair applicants and provided them with this information as well as posting information on our webpage and in our waiting room. During our busiest summer period (May to July), we will process twice as many au pairs and will provide them with the same information.

¶6. Sweden is a destination, and, to a lesser extent, a transit country for women trafficked from Romania, Russia, Nigeria, Albania, Tanzania, Thailand and Estonia for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. In October 2009, Swedish Justice Minister Beatrice Ask met with G/TIP Ambassador Luis CdeBaca in Washington to review Swedish efforts to combat trafficking and to exchange best-practices. Going forward, Post will continue to monitor Swedish law enforcement efforts to address both sex and labor trafficking, and post will reach out to programs in Sweden that support victims through rehabilitation, healthcare, vocational training and legal assistance.

¶7. Post assesses a new opportunity for engagement on women's entrepreneurship emphasizing clean/green-tech initiatives. In Sweden, women start and run businesses to a lesser extent than men. Just 25% of all businesses in Sweden are run by women, and only 32% of all start-ups in 2008 were headed by women. As a result, the GOS adopted in July 2009 a sixty-point strategy to boost new entrepreneurship by women with a goal of increasing the proportion of women starting new enterprises from 35% to 40% by 2010. Post has supported

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this effort by sending two participants in recent years for IVLP programs on business development for women business leaders. As part of Post's ongoing effort to increase U.S. - Swedish partnerships on clean-tech and environmental issues, we will work to identify and support female-run initiatives that incorporate innovative green technology.

¶8. Post recognizes the need for continued engagement with immigrant women from minority communities, who represent approximately 7% or 661,500 of Sweden's 9.3 million inhabitants and who suffer from steep barriers to the Swedish labor market (ref C). In the coming year, the GOS aims to increase access to employment services through special programs aimed at immigrant women from Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan. Through our minority outreach and visitor exchange programs, we will continue to target leadership and entrepreneurial opportunities for this population (ref D).  
SILVERMAN